January/February 1998 $2.50

MONTANA OUTDOORS

SPECIAL PHOTO ISSUE

FAMILY OUTING IN THE ABSAROKAS
Dusan Smetana

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Montana Outdoors (ISSN 0027-0016), the official publication of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, is published bimonthly (January, March, May, July, September, and November). Contributions (manuscripts or illustrations) are welcome with the understanding that the department or the editor cannot be responsible for loss or damage. All contributions will be published at the discretion of the editor. For subscription information, phone **800/678-6668** (toll-free). Subscription rates are $9 for one year, $16.00 for two years, and $22 for three years. (Please add $3.50 per year for Canadian subscriptions. All other foreign subscriptions, air mail only, are $25 for one year.) Individual copies and back issues cost $3.50 each (includes postage). Although ***Montana Outdoors*** is copyrighted, permission to reprint articles is available by writing our office or phoning us at 406/444-2474. All correspondence should be addressed: ***Montana Outdoors***, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 930 West Custer Ave., P.O. Box 200701; Helena, MT 59620-0701. ©Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 1998. All rights reserved. Indexed by States' Periodical Index, 1660 Smithville Road; Havre, MT 59501.

Postmaster: Send address changes to ***Montana Outdoors***, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, 930 West Custer Ave., P.O. Box 200701; Helena, MT 59620-0701. Preferred periodicals postage paid at Helena, MT 59620, and additional mailing offices.

Front Cover
WHITETAIL BUCK
Donald M. Jones

Back Cover
JERUSALEM ROCKS
NEAR SWEETGRASS
John Lambing

The text for this year's Special Photo Issue is excerpted from "The Bridge," an FWP documentary film written by Marshall Riggan and directed by Mike Gurnett. Video copies of "The Bridge" are available for $29.95 from the Montana State Parks and Wildlife Interpretive Association, P.O. Box 9211, Helena, MT 59604.

MONTANA OUTDOORS

January/February 1998
Volume 29, Number 1

The year-end holidays on Larch Street in Libby live on vividly as a warm memory in my mind and heart. With six boys and one girl in our household the amount of childhood anticipation for those holidays could have been reflected by the moon as it passed over the snow-covered woods of northwest Montana. Around the holidays among the Racicot children the level of interest and competition to be helpful and good was unusually high. This was especially true if we bounded in the door covered with snow from sledding and smelled the addictive aroma of chocolate: Mom's making fudge!

Mom's annual fudge was famous throughout the family and may very well be the best in the world.

The inspiring power of those memories I think comes from their repetition, year after year, generation after generation. Every family has them. To me, memories are the nails of family life and sharing them is the glue.

In its own way, this 17th annual Montana Outdoors photo issue has become a kind of holiday tradition that stirs some of our fondest memories of this wonderful place that we call Montana. Once again the images within are exquisite and Marshall Riggan's words, which were originally crafted for Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' award-winning documentary, "The Bridge," are inspiringly appropriate for our times. Montana and its wondrous families are experiencing now yet another series of year-end holidays and facing another exciting New Year full of opportunity. From our house to yours, may we all help give each other just a touch of that childhood wonder—and remember quietly how much alike we all are. May the joys of these days be as warm as our hearths—and hearts—and may all bridges lead you home. God bless Montana and its families.

Best wishes,

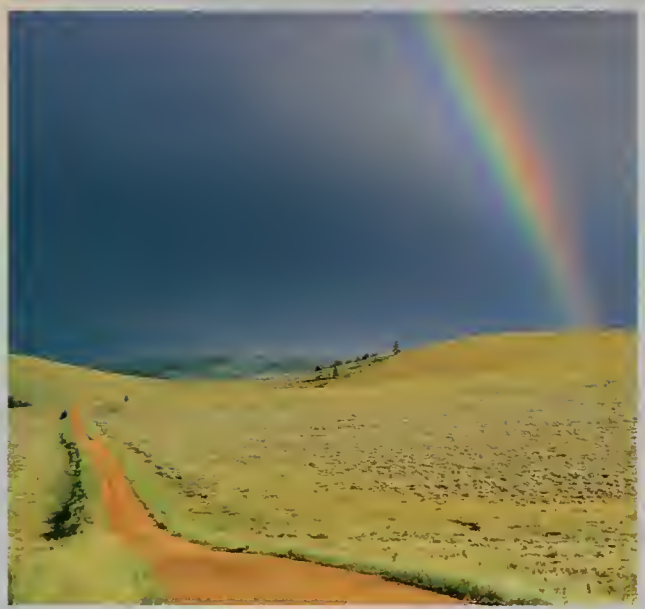
Marc Racicot

MARC RACICOT
Governor

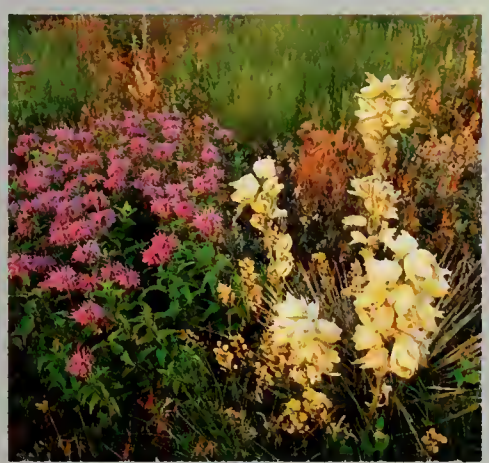
HOLLAND LAKE
Conrad Rowe

There is a place and an experience sliding through time like a wing through wind. We have come to call it Montana. Great mountains tumbling eastward and then soaring upward at the front as if surprised by the plain. Easy endless pastures of rolling green. Deep, wide forests hiding secrets. Wildflower meadows, clouds of spun silver.

Montana is the land.



PRAIRIE RAINBOW
John Lambing



HORSEMINT AND YUCCA
John Lambing

MEDICINE ROCKS STATE PARK
Larry Javorsky

But it is something more. For the land is a stage upon which a powerful human drama has been played. Lives lived before us which shaped the roles we play in our own time.

If we can build a bridge to those lives—that great chorus of distant heartbeats—our own will be enriched beyond measure.

Throughout the state we are preserving bridges to our past. Historical sites and parks which provide us an awareness of where we reside on that great continuum leading from pre-history toward tomorrow. To understand our own time with clarity, it is critical to preserve access to the past.

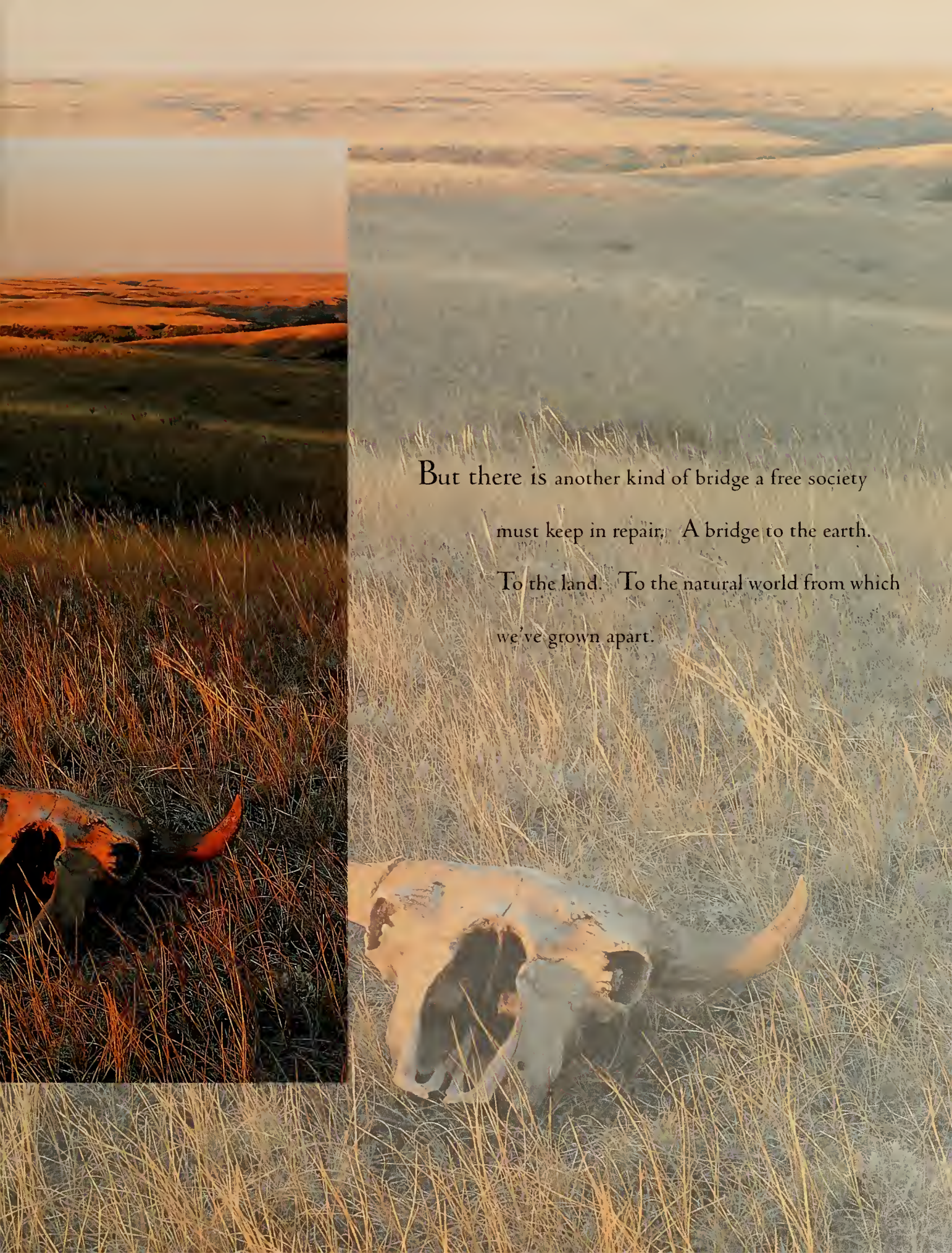
PICTOGRAPHS
Gary Leppart

ULM PISHKUN STATE PARK
John Lambing

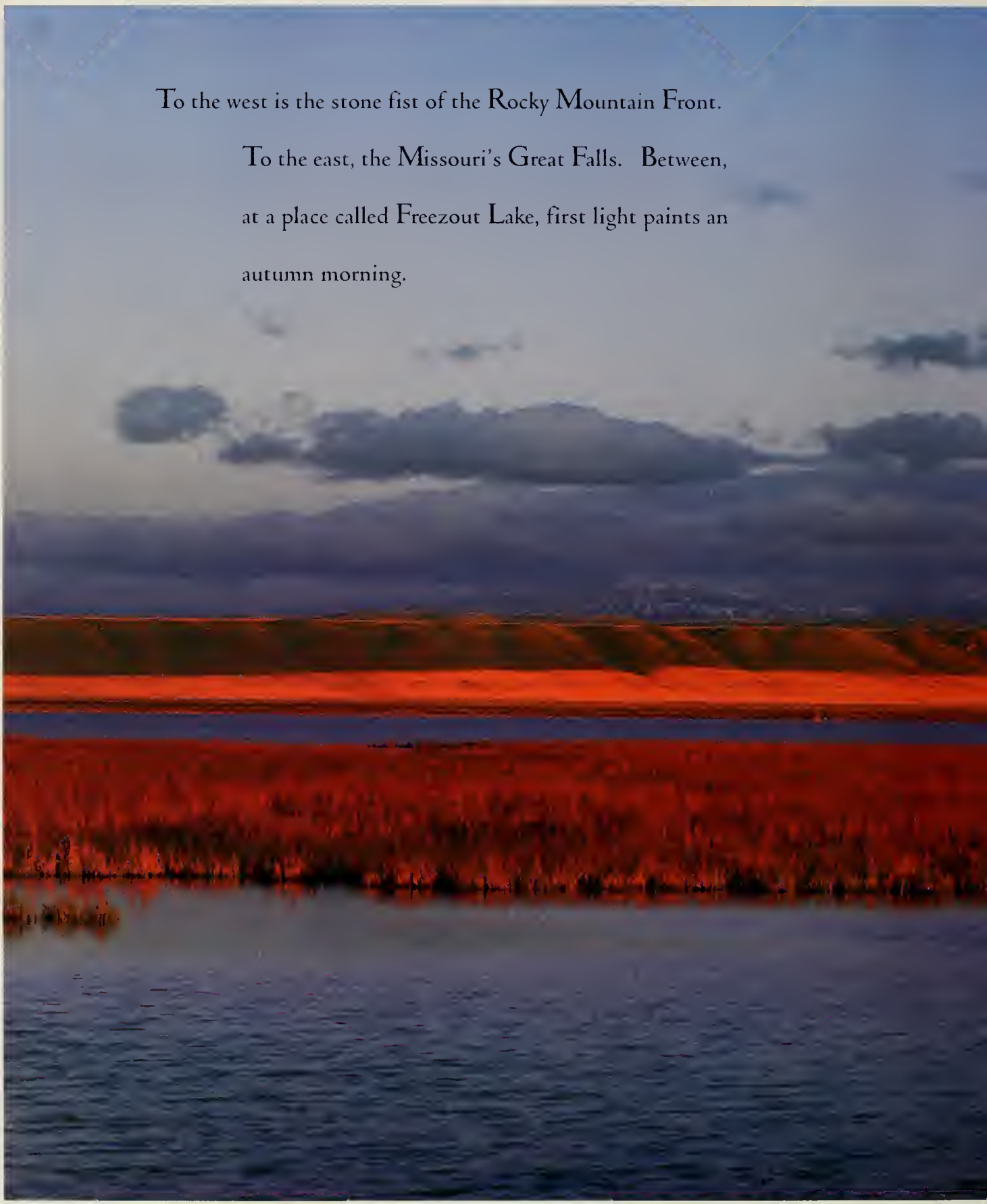
BANNACK STATE PARK
W. Steve Sherman

South of Badger Pass, near Grasshopper Creek, there is a bridge to who we were and are. A ghost town now, preserved as a Montana state park, Bannack was once a booming, lawless, dream-filled town, capital of the Montana Territory. And if the essence of who we are was nourished by the solitudes of the wilderness, it was also forged by gold fever. For the first time in world history, any man, regardless of birth, could become fabulously wealthy in the wink of a eye. There was gold in Grasshopper Creek.

GRASSLAND NEAR CHESTER
John Lambing



But there is another kind of bridge a free society must keep in repair. A bridge to the earth. To the land. To the natural world from which we've grown apart.

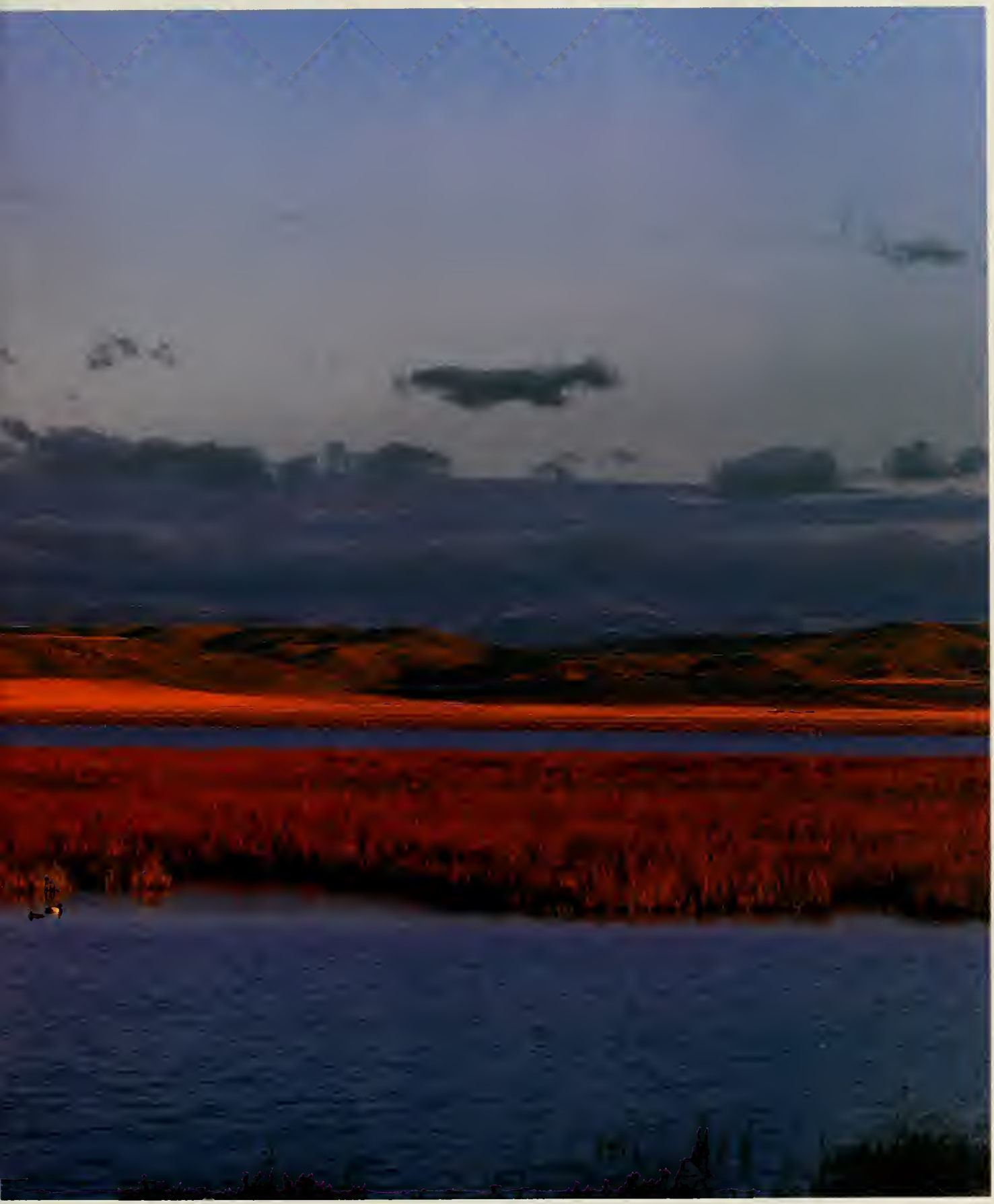


To the west is the stone fist of the Rocky Mountain Front.

To the east, the Missouri's Great Falls. Between,

at a place called Freezout Lake, first light paints an

autumn morning.



FREEZOUT LAKE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA
Chuck Haney

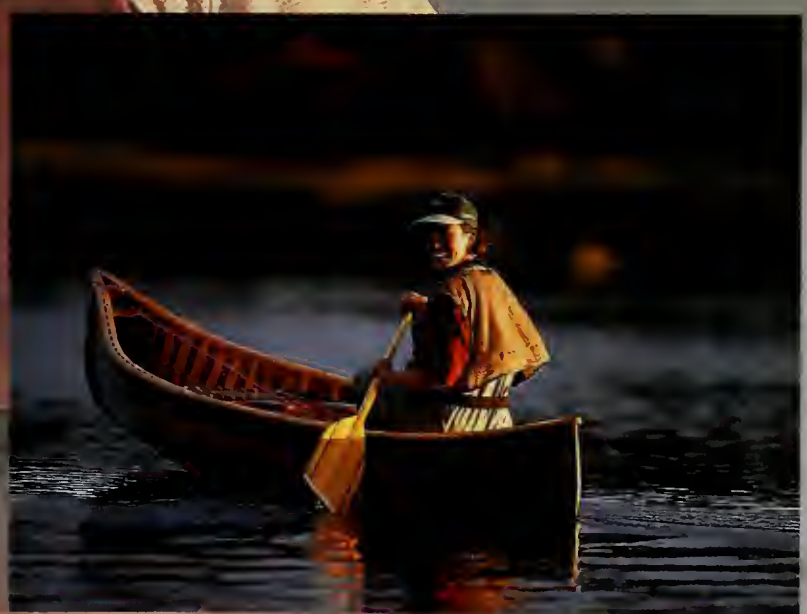
SNOW GEESE AT FREEZOUT LAKE
Richard Mousel

In a country where private ownership is a hard-won virtue, the preservation of lands for public use is a cultural imperative. For we are a part of the land, and without access to the natural environment, we are far from whole. The 12,000-acre Freezout Lake Wildlife Management Area is one of many lands within Montana preserved to bring people and nature together again. And the reunion is a magic thing to see. At times, up to a million waterfowl are here at one time. Snow geese, tundra swans, pintails, and mallards. A living classroom for those who would better understand the morning of the fourth day of Creation.

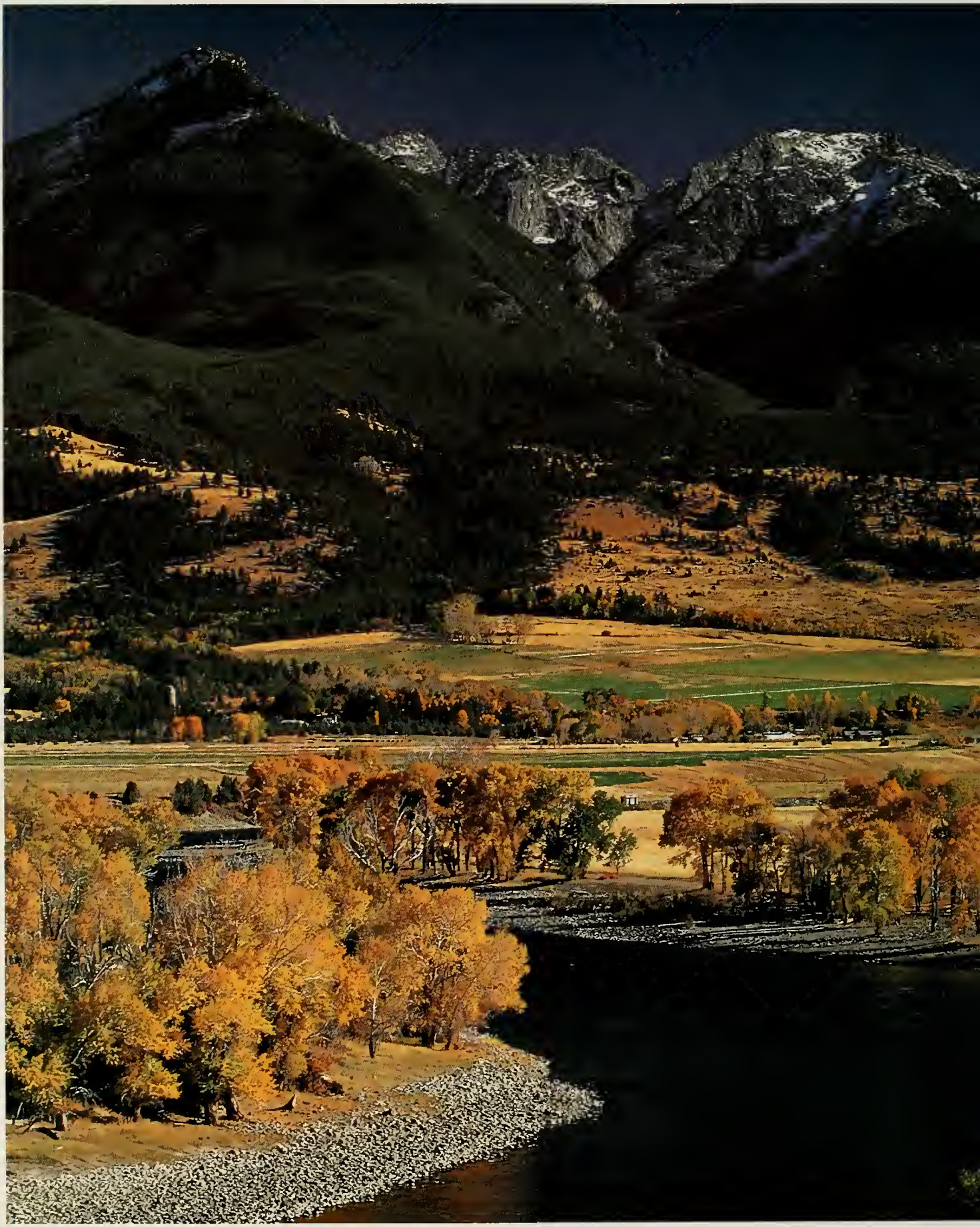
YOUNG BIRDWATCHERS
Mike Garnett

BIG HOLE RIVER
Mark C. Boesch

The natural tapestry of Montana's lands is traced with a silver thread of rivers. Sometimes whisper still, sometimes thunder. The Madison, the Yellowstone, the Flathead, Big Hole, and Missouri. It was along the rivers that our experience with the land began. Without free passage to the rivers we would be locked away from our most precious heritage.



CANOEING NEAR THREE FORKS
Denver Bryan



YELLOWSTONE RIVER, PARADISE VALLEY
Scott Wheeler

Remember the way the profile of the mountains changes

as you move from one riverbend to another?

The day warm as a hand...clouds dancing

slowly in their white gowns. Learning the

mysteries of the river from one who had lived

its secrets. The river's song over smooth,

round stones. The sense of being the first

people to ever come this way.

A high-hearted

encounter with a

rainbow.

RAINBOW TROUT
S. Brooks Bedwell

Feeling the power

of a river narrowed by the canyon. Wisps of

cold spray and the sound of cannonade.

Then...that other mood. Lazy as a truant.

An easy old poem without verbs.

Remember the rivers?

MISSOURI RIVER NEAR HARDY
Chuck Haney

FLYFISHING THE WEST GALLATIN
Denver Bryan

On the rivers and streams of Montana, hundreds of thousands of people spend several million days angling each year. There is the call of the cutthroat, the rainbow, the grayling, and the brown. The whitefish and the walleye. And the strangely prehistoric paddlefish of the Yellowstone and Missouri.

But what if there were no public access to the rivers? It would be as if a great cultural treasure were locked away in a vault somewhere. Yet, Montana's treasure remains. For together, we have built a bridge to the rivers. A bridge we can cross freely if we wish. Working with landowners and sportsmen, we have established access sites—small parcels of land along major Montana rivers. Now we can embark on adventures not unlike the first adventures lived on this land. We have preserved a bridge to bring us back to the river.

YOUNG ANGLERS
Mark C. Boesch

BUGLING ELK
Donald M. Jones

There is another bridge we must cross if we are to feel the land and our history alive in our lives.

It is a bridge to the bear...

To the ram...

To the eagle...

And the elk.

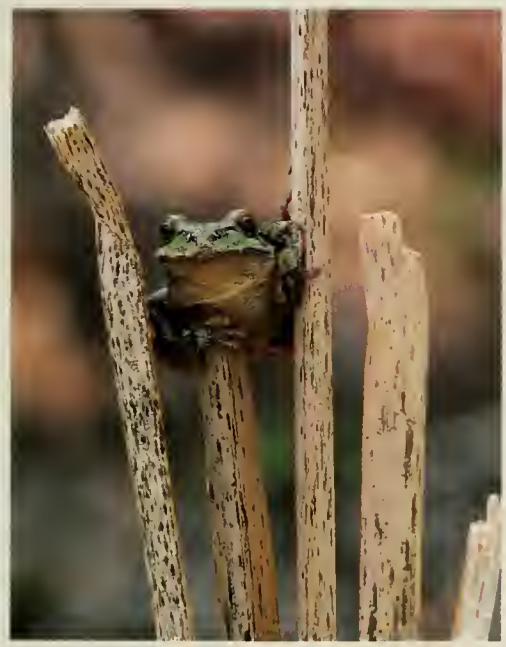
BLACK BEAR CUBS
Donald M. Jones

BALD EAGLE
Jeffrey Rich

BIGHORN SHEEP
Kerry T. Nickou

PINE MARTEN
Tom J. Ulrich

For years without number, we have shared our land and our history with a vibrant tapestry of living things. There was a time when the human community and the wildlife of our natural environment were easy neighbors. But, with time, we have become strangers. Little by little, our wild, free neighbors found fences and towns blocking the paths of their ancient and imperative migrations. But now we are building a bridge back to the bear and the ram, the eagle and the elk.

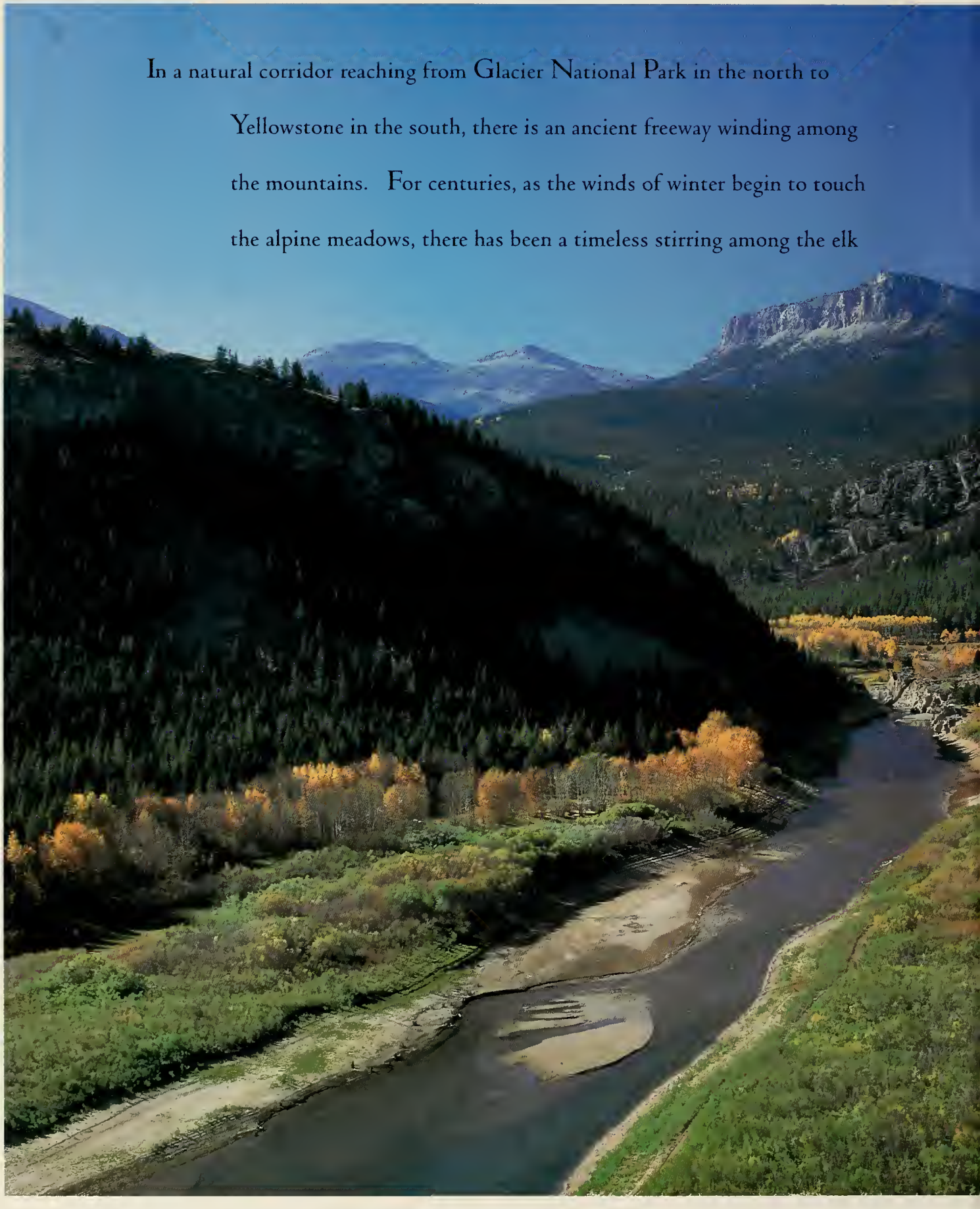


PACIFIC CHORUS FROG
Donald M. Jones

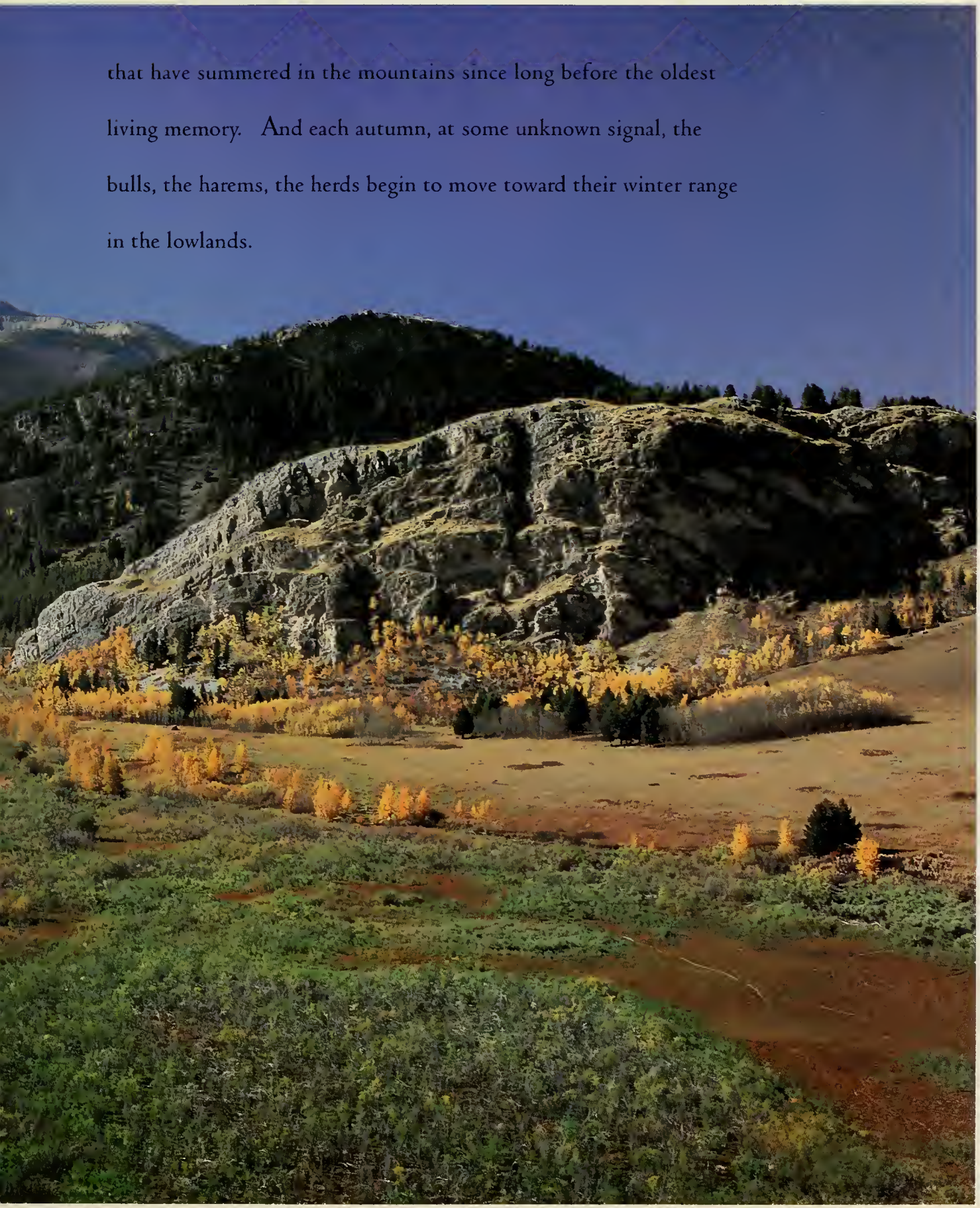
WHITE-TAILED PTARMIGAN
Conrad Rowe

OTTER FAMILY
Pete & Alice Bengeyfield

In a natural corridor reaching from Glacier National Park in the north to Yellowstone in the south, there is an ancient freeway winding among the mountains. For centuries, as the winds of winter begin to touch the alpine meadows, there has been a timeless stirring among the elk



that have summered in the mountains since long before the oldest living memory. And each autumn, at some unknown signal, the bulls, the harems, the herds begin to move toward their winter range in the lowlands.



SUN RIVER NEAR BOB MARSHALL WILDERNESS
Mark C. Boesch

Each year, they are led inexorably to a specific range, claimed as their own in some curious transaction with nature in the distant past. The migration pattern from summer to winter range seems to be a biological imperative. A rhythm absolutely critical to the elk's survival.

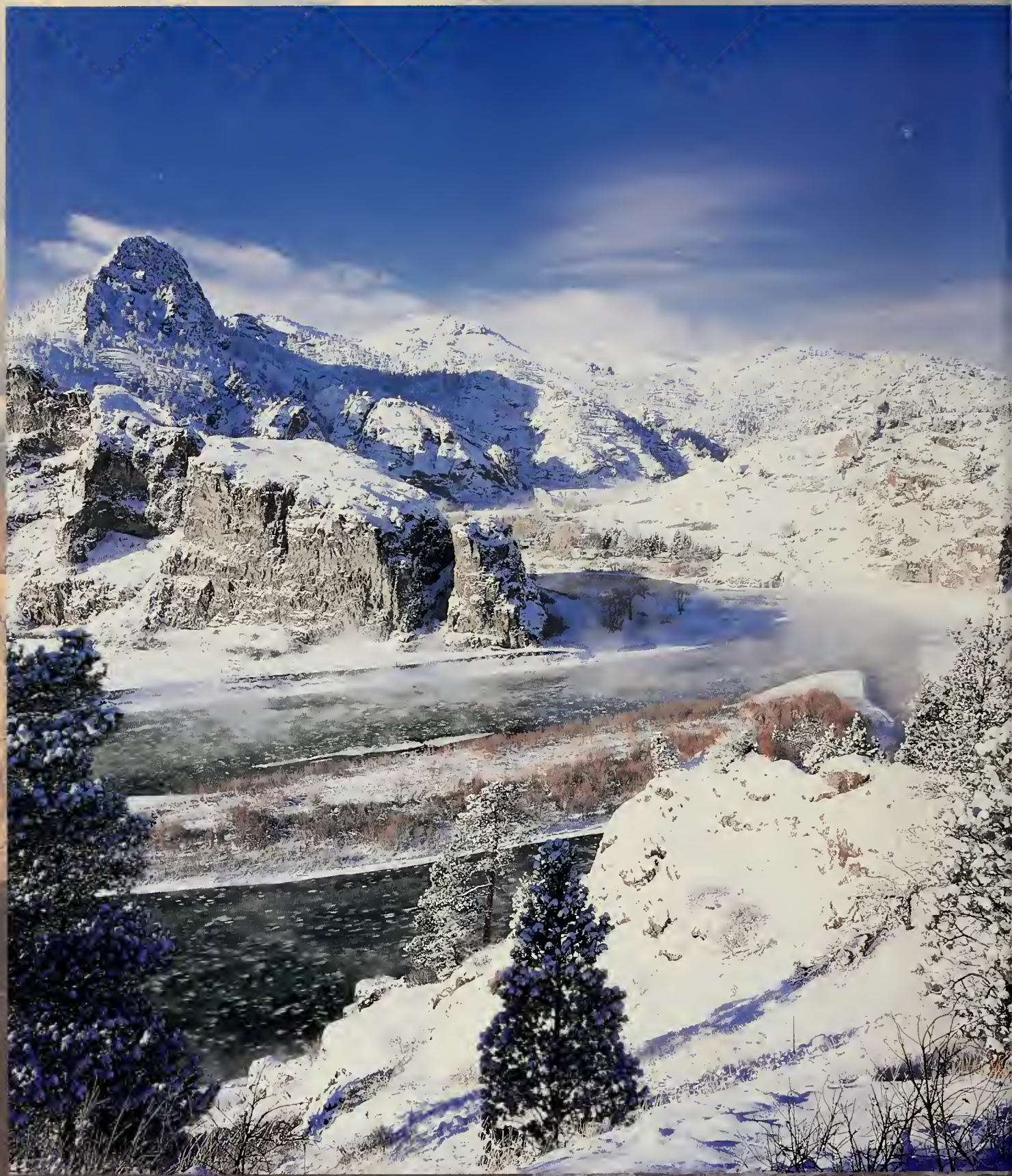
BULL ELK
Mike Barlow

CASTLE REEF, ROCKY MOUNTAIN FRONT
John Lambing

In the early years of this century, an alliance of conservationists, cattlemen, and sportsmen began an effort to preserve the historic winter ranges—to build bridges along which the elk might pass. Land was purchased and a series of managed game ranges established. Sun River. Ear Mountain. Beartooth. Blackfoot-Clearwater. Mount Haggin. Managed by Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, these lands assure a continuing natural balance between the needs of the human community and our neighboring wildlife. By saving the elk, we have preserved a thing of immeasurable value to our own lives.

MOUNT HAGGIN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA
Chuck Haney

FOOTHILLS BELOW EAR MOUNTAIN
John Lambing



UPPER MISSOURI RIVER
John Lambing

There is a bridge we built together that takes us back to something we were in danger of losing. Back to our own land and our own history. It was difficult to build, this bridge. It took a very long time. And it is not nearly as strong as it might be. Some say there is no need to have a bridge at all. The past is gone, the land has changed. Why cling to what is passing? Yet, once you have stepped across and felt the wandering ghosts of a goldrush town... Heard the honking of the snow geese on an autumn morning... Felt the river sliding down through a stone canyon... Touched the country of the bear and the ram, the eagle and the elk... Once you have celebrated these things, the critical importance of the bridge becomes abundantly clear. It does not lead away from where we are. It leads us home.

ST. MARY BRIDGE, GLACIER PARK
Chuck Haney

ELKHORN STATE PARK
Richard Mousel

HOMEWARD BOUND
Mike Barlow

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